Radical Grace and the Economy

Module VII. Denial of Justice

This is *Section II* of the broader workbook called
Radical Grace and the Economy

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Here's the first of 6 issues we'll discuss in this section:

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Capitalist Mythology

The story we're fed.

Issues

- *Justice is Automatic*
  - ✓ When the economy is working as advertised, we need not worry about justice. It happens automatically. Economists have built a mathematical fantasy called "perfect competition" and claim that it balances all markets efficiently so that everyone gets what they deserve. That is, with efficient markets, justice happens automatically — a collateral benefit — so don't worry about it.
- *Efficiency is All We Need*
  - ✓ When injustices arise from market imperfections, just make the market more perfect and it will fix itself. Any attempt to rebalance the economy is interference in the sacred marketplace.

Discussion Questions

1. **Explain how perfect competition is perfect justice**, so that even Karl Marx wouldn't complain about it.
2. **Then why isn't it good enough** just to make the market more perfect?
3. **Do you find the market economy** has treated you well? If it has, what's so bad about it?

The Problem, Not the Solution

The backstory.

Issues

- *Not As Advertised*
  - ✓ While the perfect economy may produce total justice in theory, the real-world imperfect economy produces exactly the opposite in practice — injustice. Efficient markets are the problem, not the solution.
- *Predatory Competition*
  - ✓ When markets run free, predatory competition leads to enormous market power and vast concentrations of capital that run roughshod over those they have disentitled.
- *Concentrations of Wealth*
  - ✓ The symptoms of this malaise are found in the boundless concentrations of wealth that leave much of the world in a state of destitution. The system that is touted as liberating humankind is the very system that is enslaving it.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can efficiency** be a problem?
2. **Do you feel you're a beneficiary** or a target of predatory business practices?
3. **Why do so many people believe** that an economic system that produces vast disparities of income and wealth is actually a guarantor of justice and equality?

True Justice

A broader justice.

Issues

- *Justice is Not a Gimmick*
  - ✓ An economy of grace would not fall for any automatic market fix even if it worked. Justice is not a parlour trick in an economic model.
- *Justice is a Community Project*
  - ✓ Justice is a community project where people accommodate each other's needs in loving interdependence, and where a sensitivity to each other's well-being inspires them to ensure that nobody is denied the resources to live in dignity.
- *Justice Is a Struggle*
  - ✓ People of the spirit know that justice is a hard-won relationship of accommodation and trust among people of good will. It's a building of relationships; it's a personal commitment to having each other's back; it's family. It's a struggle to counter the effects of the unholy market

Discussion Questions

1. **Why is justice about more than just** a fair distribution of goods and services?
2. **Argue the case that justice is a relationship** of caring and interdependence, not just a matter of fair trade.
3. **To what extent have you internalized** the idea that justice is just an economic balancing of the books?

Franciscan Justice

Serving those left behind.

Issues

- *Out in the World*
  - ✓ The Franciscan Order gets out in the street and deals with injustice on a daily basis — from feeding the hungry to marching with the homeless for just treatment. St. Francis began his ministry showing kindness to a leper, the ultimate outcast of his day.
- *Justice is Service and Struggle*
  - ✓ Followers of St. Francis carry on that tradition in service to the marginalized of today's society. But that they don't merely feed people. They denounce and fight the unjust structures that make them needy in the first place.

Discussion Questions

1. **How is justice in the Franciscan tradition**, a way of life more than it's just a belief?
2. **Is it realistic to seek justice**, or is feeding people all we can do?

Indigenous Justice

Issues

Leaving no one behind.

- *Original Prey*
  - ✓ Indigenous people are the original casualties of injustice of all kinds. Struggling to survive it and fighting to end it are in their blood.
- *Original Caring*
  - ✓ In spite of generations-long efforts to Europeanize them — they still cling to their values of not leaving anyone behind.
- *"We are Still Here"*
  - ✓ In colonial society, they are often the ones who are left out. As they fight to leave colonialism behind, their call for reconciliation is a call to confront injustice and give everyone a place of dignity.

Discussion Questions

1. **Not leaving anyone behind.** Is that all we need to create a just community? What about restorative justice?
2. **Is reconciliation just peacekeeping**, or is it cry for justice?

Redirecting Policy

Debunking and rescuing.

Issues

- *The Call for Debunking*
  - ✓ Perhaps the first task here is debunking the preposterous ideology at the root of our dysfunction — that efficient markets mean justice. But that's not enough.
- *The Call for Exposing*
  - ✓ People have been de-sensitized to the conditions of oppression, largely because they've been led to believe it's not really happening. And maybe it's not happening — in their back yards. A fuller and more realistic picture needs to be presented, introducing people to the facts of life and confronting them with the hidden suffering at home and abroad.
- *The Call for Policy*
  - ✓ Policies have to be turned on their head. Break the malicious myth that justice is always served by the market if only it's left free to work its magic — and start aggressively redirecting resources to those who are deeply in need. We'll know we're breaking ground when the pushback from the over-entitled becomes fierce.

Discussion Questions

1. **How have so many people been persuaded** that nobody's really oppressed? How can they be made aware that the economy is not as benign as they're led to believe?
2. **How can people be led to acknowledge** the suffering that flows from their blind affluence — out of sight out of mind — without making them feel under attack? How can we make them care?
3. **Do you personally have enough affluence** in your life that you have to reconcile it with all the oppression in the world?

This is Module VII. Denial of Justice

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